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ABSTRACT

Between July 1975 and August 1977, telephone interview surveys were conducted to assess the sociceconomic adjustment of Vietnamese refugees to American society. Between the first and last survey, it was found that the employment situation of the refugees had improved. Most refugees who want work have been able to find jobs. The data suggest that on the measures of employment and income the newly arrived Vietnamese refugees are making substantial progress. The refugees still face many problems, however. Most have jobs of lower status than they held in Vietnam, and their pay is low by American standards. Most require greater proficiency in English. Some report feelings of isolation and depression. Nevertheless, in general, the refugees are making substantial socioeconomic progress and are moving toward self-sufficiency. The sociohistorical model used in the analysis shows the contrast between the immigration and assimilation pattern of earlier Asian immigrants and the unique pattern of migration leading to sccioeconomic adaptation and future assimilation of the Vietnamese refugees. (Author/RLV)

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The Vietnamese Refugees in America:

Patterns of Socioeconomic Adaptation

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Abstract

Between July 1975 and August 1977 five waves of telephone interview surveys were conducted to assess the socioeconomic adjustment of Vietnamese refugees to American society. The sample was drawn from the Evacuee Master File which includes a complete enumeration of all 144,908 Vietnamese refugees processed out of all resettlement camps in the United States. Drawing from the findings, we propose a model describing the spontaneous migration pattern of the Vietnamese refugees compared to the more traditional immigration pattern of other Asians in the United States. We discuss the factors which contribute to the socioeconomic status of the Vietnamese refugees and attempt to forecast future prospects for the Vietnamese in America.

During the month of April 1975, the first evacuees from Vietnam began arriving at the refugee center in Guam, a temporary haven hastily set up to house an estimated 50,000 Indochinese. The mass of refugees fled from South Vietnam within one week, April 25 - May 1, 1975, with 75 percent leaving in just two days, April 29 and 30. A news blackout prevented the majority of people in Saigon from recognizing the speed with which the communist troops were approaching the city, and when the shelling of the capital began in earnest the citizenry responded with fear and panic. Many feared reprisal in the event of a communist victory, and others simply fled in fear for their lives because of the intense shelling (Liu and Muratta, 1977a).

Stories about dramatic airlifts from Vietnam filtered in through the media and captured the American consciousness. A month later attention switched to the refugee centers stateside, at locations such as Camp Pendleton, California, and Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. By the end of the summer, articles began appearing in local newspapers detailing the sometimes harsh realities of daily life facing particular Vietnamese families resettling in communities across the United States. Six months after the evacuation began, 1546 Vietnamese boarded the freighter Vietnam Thuong Tim I in Guam, choosing to be repatriated rather than resettle. But what of the majority that stayed behind?

As of January 1976, some 144,908 Indochina refugees were

living in all of the 50 states, plus the District of Columbia, American Samoa, and Puerto Rico. With more than 30,000 refugees, California easily ranks first in number of Vietnamese refugees, Texas ranks second with some 11,000 refugees, while Pennsylvania ranks third with some 8800. The circumstances surrounding the resettlement of the Vietnamese have created their own unique set of problems.

Abruptly uprooted from all that was familiar, the Vietnamese entered American society in large numbers, as representatives of an alien culture and race (Hirayama, 1977). To compound the problems, the Vietnamese refugees arrived in the United States at a time when the rate of unemployment was almost 9 percent, and many Americans feared that an influx of refugees would create an added drain on already over-burdened public assistance rolls. These attitudes were reflected in a 1975 Gallup Poll which reported that 54 percent of Americans felt the Vietnamese should not be permitted to stay in this country (Kneeland, 1975).

How have the Vietnamese refugees fared, in light of the obstacles they faced upon arrival in the United States? The purpose of the present study is to examine the process of their resettlement and acculturation in a new land. We present herein survey data on the socioeconomic status of the refugees collected at various stages of resettlement. To date, five waves of data have been collected, each containing information about employment status, income, and types of federal assistance received. The present study reports

the findings from these five surveys which are based upon a systematic random sample of the Vietnamese refugees. Specifically, we shall explore the effects of the Vietnamese pattern of migration and resettlement upon their socioeconomic adaptation in the United States. Based on our findings, we shall forecast future prospects for the complete assimilation of the Vietnamese refugees as compared with the prospects of earlier Asian immigrants.

Review of the Literature

While there is a growing body of literature regarding general patterns of refugee movements (Kunz, 1973; Lee, 1969; Petersen, 1958), there have been few scholarly studies concerning the adaptation of Vietnamese refugees to the United States. The recency of the Vietnamese evacuation and resettlement could serve as a partial explanation for this dearth. In addition, the emotional reaction in this country to the war itself and the bitter and divisive public debate over draft resistance, MIAs, and the implications of My Lai have, to some extent, affected public attitude toward the refugees themselves and could account for the paucity of information on this subject.

Many of the more recent studies of the Vietnamese people were conducted in the 60s and 70s and, thus, have inevitably concentrated on the Vietnamese in Vietnam, not as a unique group in the United States (Cooke, 1968; Crawford, 1966; Hammer, 1966; Hickey, 1964). A careful search of the literature indicates that only a few scholarly studies on the resettlement of the Vietnamese have been conducted.

In an article based on personal observation and interviews, Tran Tuong Nhu (1976) describes the personal trauma experienced by the Vietnamese refugees. She concludes that a United States government policy which dispersed the Vietnamese in small groups across the land under the care of private sponsors presented a major obstacle to their adjustment to American life. This policy, she states, separated them from the ethnic group they needed for comfort and emotional support.

In a second study Doan (1977) examines several variables: those which foster the process of acculturation among some 245 Vietnamese, and those variables which impede that process. Doan's (1977) major findings suggest that acculturation of the refugees is more dependent upon English language proficiency than on any other factor.

A monographic report prepared by the Naval Health Research Unit sought to monitor Vietnamese refugee adjustment and mental health conditions during their first ninety days in transition at Camp Pendleton, California (Rahe, Looney, Ward, et al., 1978). Interviews were conducted with 202 Saigon refugees. In a series of four articles based on the interviews in that report, Liu and Murata (1977a; 1977b; 1978a; 1978b) describe the circumstances under which the Vietnamese fled their homeland and examine their resettlement in the United States from the perspective of refugee as opposed to immigrant. The authors describe life in the Vietnamese refugee camps as compared to life in other relatively recent refugee settlements. The camps themselves are assessed to show how they

both hindered and helped the Vietnamese to adjust to American life.

In a recent volume, Kelly (1977) provides a chronicle of the refugees' flight and immigration, as well as a brief demographic profile. Kelly (1977) also describes the refugee camps, their social organization, cultural life, routines, and programs to prepare the immigrants for life in the United States. She examines a series of family profiles in order to determine the extent to which the Vietnamese have adjusted socially and culturally to their newly adopted country. The empirical data Kelly (1977) examines are derived largely from reports made to the Congress from the Interagency Task Force for Indochina Refugees. These data are supplemented with the author's interviews with selected Vietnamese respondents. Kelly (1977) concludes that the Vietnamese in the United States have been transformed from refugees to immigrants. She states that these former refugees now view their future in terms of America rather than Vietnam.

Demographic Profile

Three studies (Kelly, 1977; Liu and Muratta, 1977b; Rahe, Looney, Ward, et al., 1978) provide a descriptive analysis of the Vietnamese refugees who came to the United States in 1975. Most were young, with nearly 50 percent under the age of 18 (United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1975, in Kelly, 1977). A substantial number of the refugees came in family groups, with family groups of five or more persons accounting for 62 percent of all immigrants (Kelly, 1977). This is a surprising statistic when one considers

the sudden and chaotic nature of their departure from Vietnam. Although only 10 percent of the Vietnamese population is Catholic, they are proportionally overrepresented among the refugees. Nearly 50 percent of the refugees are Catholic, and about 27 percent are Buddhist (Rahe, Looney, Ward, et al., 1978). Two-thirds of the refugees come from urban settings, largely from relatively well-to-do families. Many were among the educational elite by Vietnamese standards and occupied a relatively high social and economic status in Vietnam.

These background characteristics would appear to bode well for the future adjustment of Vietnamese refugees to American society. However, the jobs open to them in this country were for the most part lower-level, involving low pay and little opportunity for advancement. This has caused an emotional crisis of some proportion and a definite feeling of deprivation and loss of prestige for many Vietnamese (Kelly, 1977; Liu and Muratta, 1977b).

Due to the abruptness of the evacuation, most Vietnamese who came to the United States were psychologically unprepared to start life anew. They had made no calculated decision to emigrate, but had simply fled what to them seemed an untenable situation. Of those who fled, 73 percent said they felt they had no alternative but to leave (Liu and Muratta, 1977a). In a survey conducted at Camp Pendleton in the summer of 1975 about half of the refugees interviewed expressed regret at having left family, fortune, and homeland (Liu and Muratta, 1977a). A look at our recent findings may shed some light upon how they are adapting socioeconomically to the larger American society.

Method

First Wave Survey

During the last two weeks of August and the first week of September, 1975, a first wave survey was conducted to assess the status of Vietnam refugees who had been processed to resettle in American communities as of July 15.[1] This first wave sample represents the first cross-sectional survey of the socioeconomic status of Vietnamese refugees. These data serve as a benchmark for the subsequent waves of survey data reported below.

The overall objective of the first wave survey was to assess the current status of Vietnam refugees being resettled in various American communities and to determine the nature of the major problems confronting them in their new life. Specifically, the survey was designed to obtain information on the background characteristics of Vietnam refugees, their employment, income, receipt of public assistance, education, and their overall integration into American society. The basic design of the survey was to select a random sample of refugees who have been resettled in various communities across the country. Telephone interviews were conducted with the head of the household or with another adult if the head of household was not available.

First-wave sampling. A systematic random sample of approximately 5000 respondents was drawn in order to assure that 2000 interviews could be completed. Of the 45,000 refugees released by mid-July, adequate information on only 35,000 was available for sampling purposes. The sample was obtained by drawing every 7th individual

from the Evacuee Master File listings of approximately 35,000 released evacuees with a random start at the 7th person. The total number of subjects thus selected was 4926. The Evacuee Master File included a complete enumeration of all refugees processed out of all resettlement camps in the United States.

The principal difficulty with this sampling plan was the likelihood of oversampling large families. The probability of selecting a family of a given size "j" was j/7. To weight the sample properly on the basis of a given characteristic, e.g., the percent unemployed, a weight of 7 was given to families of size 1, 7/2 to families of size 2, 7/3 to families of size 3, and so on. However, for any family of size 7 or greater, a weight of 7/7 (1) was used.

Tables in the present paper report the weighted percentages obtained by using these weighting procedures. Each table reporting weighted percentages also gives the unweighted number of cases (N) for the group upon which each percentage was based.

First wave survey procedure. The Evacuee Master File did not contain the telephone numbers of the refugee or his or her sponsor. Attempts to secure the telephone numbers of the refugees through the use of the telephone directory assistance, using the sponsor's name and address, turned out to be of little value. Subsequently, letters were mailed out under the auspices of HEW, to each sampled respondent, notifying him or her of the forthcoming telephone survey and asking the respondent to provide his or her current telephone number and address. A total of 3234 letters were received by the cut-off date, including 642 which were returned, address unknown. Of those refugees

who returned the initial letter of notification, 489 gave no telephone numbers and 538 gave incorrect numbers, leaving 1570 usable responses.

A comparison by age, sex, education, and date of release from camp between the population (35,000 released refugees), the initial sample (4926), and the interviewed sample (1570) indicated that there were no statistical differences between the three groups (Montero in press: Appendix A).

Second Wave Survey

In the latter part of November and early December 1975, a second wave survey, similar in content to the first one, was conducted to assess the situation of refugees being resettled as of October 15 and to follow up on a number of families who were part of the first wave survey. Specifically, this survey was designed to obtain further information on the background characteristics of the refugees, their employment, income, receipt of public assistance, education, and the overall experience of their integration into American society.

Second wave sampling. The second survey of Vietnamese refugees was completed by conducting telephone interviews with a national probability sampling of heads of household. The sample was designed to be representative of all refugees who had left resettlement camps on or before October 15, 1975. The sample had two components. The first was a sample of 446 randomly drawn from the 1570 heads of household who had responded to the first survey of refugees. The second component of the sample consisted of a simple random sample of heads of household who had left the resettlement camps between July 16 and October 15. The sample of 2930 heads of household

resulted in 978 completed interviews. Thus, combining 446 interviews from the same respondents as in the Wave I survey with 978 interviews from the new Wave II sample, a total of 1424 interviews were conducted with heads of household in the Wave II survey. This represented families with a total of 7498 individuals of whom 54.8 percent were males and 45.2 percent were females.

Third Wave Survey

During the month of July and early August 1976, a third wave survey was conducted. Telephone interviews were completed with 617 heads of household drawn from a population of all Vietnam refugees resettled in the United States. This comprises a total of 2936 persons (hereafter referred to as the cross-sectional sample). A second component of the third wave survey consisted of 398 heads of household, comprising a total of 2071 persons who had previously been interviewed in both the first and second wave surveys (hereafter referred to as the longitudinal sample).

Fourth Wave Survey

During March and April 1977, a fourth wave survey was conducted. The survey sample consisted of all households with whom interviews were completed for the first time in Wave III (N=617) and a subsample of households who did not respond in Wave III (N=166).

Telephone interviews were completed with 645 heads of household (541 from the longitudinal group and 104 from the non-response group), representing a cross-section of all Vietnam refugees resettled

in the United States and comprising a total of 2949 persons.

In projecting estimates for the entire Vietnam refugee population as of the survey date, each of these 645 cases was weighted to reflect the demographic characteristics of the larger Vietnamese refugee population.

Fifth Wave Survey

During the months of July and August 1977 a fifth wave survey was conducted to reassess the situation of the Vietnam refugees resettled in the United States.

The survey sample for the fifth wave consisted of all households with whom interviews were completed in Wave IV (N=645). Telephone interviews were completed with 607 heads of household comprising a total of 2817 persons. In projecting estimates for the entire Vietnam refugee population as of the survey date, each of these 607 cases was weighted as done in Wave IV.

Findings

Between August 1975 and August 1977, five cross-sectional samples of Vietnam refugees were surveyed at five points in time. These surveys were designed to assess the overall situation of refugees resettled in the United States and to determine the nature of the problems confronting them in their new life.

Labor Force Participation[2]

Table 1 shows the rates for labor force participation of male Vietnam refugees by relationship to heads of household in Surveys I through V, while Table 2 shows the same data for females. In all five surveys, a substantially higher proportion of males than females was estimated to be in the labor force. The higher ratio of males to females in the labor force was maintained for most categories of persons in the household.

Labor force participation for males increased from 69.0 percent at the time of Survey I, to 78.7 percent at Survey II, and 80.0 percent at Survey III. It decreased to 76.5 percent at Survey IV but increased again to 79.2 percent at Survey V. Labor force participation for females also increased steadily over the same period of time, from 39.3 percent at Survey I, to 40.0 percent at Survey II, 44.1 percent at Survey III, 44.5 percent at Survey IV, and 49.8 percent at Survey V.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 here.

Employment Status of Vietnam Refugees

Tables 3 and 4 present the employment rates[3] for males and females, respectively, 16 years and older by relationship to head of household. The employment rates for males at each survey period were consistently higher than those for females. However, in Survey V the employment rates for females are almost as high as those for males, and this is true for all categories of persons in the household.

The employment picture for both males and females has improved steadily and significantly over the two-year period. Between Survey I and Survey V, the employment rates for males increased by 26.9 percentage points (from 68.2 percent to 95.1 percent) while the rates for females increased by 42.3 percentage points (from 50.9 percent to 93.2 percent).

Insert Tables 3 and 4 here.

Employment by Age and Sex

The employment rates for both males and females increased substantially between Survey I and Survey V regardless of age. In each of the four age groups studied (16-24, 25-34, 35-44, and 45 and over), there was a monotonic increase in percentage employed from Wave I through Wave V, with only two exceptions (employment rates for males aged 16-24 and females aged 45 and over dropped slightly between Waves IV and V).

We speculate that many of the women entered the labor force to bolster family income. Some concern has arisen within the Vietnamese

community that this employment of women has signaled a change in power relations within Vietnamese families, thus causing marital disputes and some separations (Kelly, 1977). Nevertheless, the fact that such a large percentage of both men and women are now employed, for whatever reason, appears to be a healthy sign considering the obstacles they faced when they first arrived in the United States.

Employment by Proficiency in English

That the Vietnamese themselves view proficiency in English as extremely important to acquiring a job and getting along in American society is underscored by the fact that 70 percent of the entire refugee population of Camp Pendleton took part in an English training program during the earliest days of their residence within the United States (Liu and Muratta, 1978a). Data in Table 5 show the employment rates by proficiency in English for Vietnam refugees in four surveys (data were not available for Wave IV). For all four surveys, the employment rates were found to be positively associated with level of English proficiency. As of March 1976, one year after leaving Vietnam, 65 percent of the refugees spoke no English, including 27 percent of the heads of household (Kelly, 1977). In spite of this tremendous obstacle, our findings indicate that 89 percent of the Vietnamese who cannot understand English at all are employed. And of those who understand English well, 97 percent are employed.

Insert Table 5 here.

Reasons for Not Seeking Employment

The reasons refugees give for not seeking employment are shown in Table 6. "Attending school" is listed as the most common reason for not seeking employment (48.2 percent in Survey V). The fact that many are attending school rather than seeking employment may be an indication of rising socioeconomic expectations. With the passage of time from Survey I to Survey V, "poor English" appears to have become less of a problem for the refugees. It was mentioned less frequently as a reason for not seeking employment (9.1 percent at Survey V compared with 19.3 percent at Survey I). "Keeping house" and "poor health" are other reasons frequently mentioned in Survey V for not seeking employment, as was the case in the other four surveys.

Insert Table 6 here.

Wage and Salary Level

The proportion of refugees working full time, at 40 hours or more per week, increased from three-fourths to slightly more than four-fifths from Survey II through Survey V. (Data from Survey I are not available.) There was also a corresponding increase in salary income from Survey II through Survey V. The proportion of persons making $200 or more per week increased from 3.2 percent at Survey II, to 5.3 percent and 9.9 percent at Surveys III and IV, respectively, to 14.3 percent at Survey V.

Income of Refugee Households

Data on household income as presented in Table 7 show a steady improvement in the financial status of refugee households from the time of Survey I to Survey V, 2 years later. The proportion of households with an income of less than $200 a month decreased from 42.1 percent at Survey I to 3.2 percent at Survey V. Moreover, the proportion of households with an income of $800 or more per month increased from 14.9 percent to 51.4 percent during the same time period. While many of the Vietnamese may have seen their standard of living lowered since leaving Vietnam, these income figures appear to reflect an improving economic picture in light of the extraordinary circumstances of their emigration and the recency of their arrival in the United States.

With regard to the percentage of contributions from each source of income to total household income, available data for Surveys III, IV, and V show that the largest component of household income comes from wages and salaries. Specifically, of every $100 of household income, 90.4 percent came from wages and salaries in Survey III; 87.9 percent came from wages and salaries in Survey IV; and 90.8 percent came from wages and salaries in Survey V. Federal assistance makes up only a small portion of total household income.

Insert Table 7 here.

Receipt of Federal Assistance

Table 8 reports the proportion of households which receive one or more types of federal assistance. The proportion of households

receiving federal assistance increased from Survey I to Survey III but decreased in both Surveys IV and V. Fewer than one in three households are currently receiving public assistance of any kind. Thus, the fear that the Vietnamese would unduly tax America's public assistance rolls would appear to have been unfounded. Public assistance accounts for less than 10 percent of the refugees' total income in the Wave V survey. It is interesting to note that this figure is similar to the percentage reported in the Wave III survey and slightly lower than that reported in the Wave IV survey.

Insert Table 8 here.

Toward a Theory of Spontaneous International Migration (S.I.M.)

In a study of general migration patterns, Kunz (1973) has divided refugee movements into two classifications, anticipatory and acute. Anticipatory refugees are described as those who leave home in an orderly way, after some preparation. Kunz (1973) theorizes that the prospects are good for their satisfactory adjustment to life in a new land. Acute refugee movements, on the other hand, are caused by massive political and military upheaval. These refugees flee en masse, or in bursts of groups, with the emphasis on escape. Kunz (1973) suggests that the latter class of refugees might be expected to face more difficult problems of adjustment than the former.

Due to the circumstances surrounding their flight from their homeland, the Vietnamese appear to fall under Kunz's (1973) classification

of acute refugees. Their background, however, would seem to be more typical of those who participate in anticipatory refugee movements. That is, they were alert, relatively well-educated, and many had some familiarity with American culture and language prior to their departure from Vietnam. The presence of the French and later the Americans in Vietnam had brought some vestiges of Western culture to that country. Indeed, many Vietnamese had a working, personal relationship with Americans prior to their emigration.

Whereas we find Kunz's (1973) classification of refugee patterns helpful, we find the two classifications to be somewhat inadequate as applied to the Vietnamese case. Certain aspects of the acute and anticipatory refugee patterns appear to merge, forming a unique combination in the Vietnamese immigration experience. We shall refer to this third distinctive pattern as the Spontaneous International Migration (S.I.M.) of the Vietnamese.[4] That is, the Vietnamese were abruptly compelled to leave their native country due to circumstances which they perceived as life-threatening. Most arrived in the United States after little or no prior preparation and with no concrete plans for the future. Their working relationship with Americans while in Vietnam, however, gave them some advantage as they faced life in a new land. This pattern is in direct contrast to other early Asian immigrants who, unlike the Vietnamese, voluntarily made their way to American shores after a period of planning and with a definite goal in mind, despite the fact that they had little prior knowledge of Western culture. The anticipatory socialization the

Vietnamese experienced before leaving their homeland might serve to facilitate their socioeconomic adaptation in the United States. Indeed, these very factors might give the Vietnamese an advantage toward assimilation as compared to earlier Asian immigrants. Thus this unique historical phenomenon of Vietnamese flight and resettlement in the United States appears to call for new theoretical explanations.

Figure 1 presents a schematic diagram of two different immigration experiences which we propose will in turn bring about different migrant outcomes. Represented here are two contrasting models of the immigration experience: the historically documented early Asian (Chinese and Japanese) immigration experience (Ichihashi, 1932; Kitano, 1976; Levine and Montero, 1973: Lyman, 1974; Miyamoto, 1939) compared with what we consider to be the unique Vietnamese experience of spontaneous international migration. The discussion below presents the sociohistorical processes which unfold in three phases as illustrated in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 here.

A Model of the Vietnamese Immigration and Resettlement Experience in the United States

Phase 1: The Homeland. We reason that the unique sociohistorical influence of the French and later the Americans upon the Vietnamese gives the refugees a distinct advantage over earlier Asian immigrants to the United States. Previous familiarity with Western language, employment, customs, and traditions, while limited, gives the Vietnamese a distinct kind of anticipatory socialization to the Western world.

Thus when the Vietnamese leave their homeland they have a unique advantage over earlier Chinese and Japanese immigrants who did not have this degree of contact with American culture. Typically, those who leave Vietnam are relatively well-educated and generally enjoy middle class financial and career status. In many cases one member of a refugee family has known or worked with Americans in Vietnam (Kelly, 1977). The joint influence of these socioeconomic factors as well as the personal relationship with Americans facilitates this emigration from Vietnam.

Phase 1 for the earlier Asian immigrants represents a time of some dissatisfaction, preparation, and then emigration from the homeland. Most who emigrate are men who leave home for financial reasons, planning to return after accumulating a nest-egg (Bonacich, 1973; Kitano, 1976; Lyman, 1974).

Phase 1a: Temporary Camps. After leaving their homeland, the Vietnamese arrive at temporary camps in the United States. Having endured the trauma of escape and in many cases separation from loved ones, they now experience some degree of culture shock due to unfamiliar housing, food, and climate. While there is very limited contact at this time with the larger American society (Liu and Muratta, 1978a), this relatively brief period of camp life (a matter of a few months) does provide a transitional period for the Vietnamese which earlier Asian immigrants did not experience. It is a time to get one's feet on the ground again, while such physical necessities as food, shelter, and medical care are provided. An educational program provides English language training and a further introduction

to American culture is available in the form of movies, educational films, television, and recreation. While many Vietnamese experience a general psychological depression over what they have left behind and anxiety over what the future might bring, most now expect to enjoy a higher life status in America than they have ever known before (Liu and Muratta, 1978b).

Phase 1b: Private Sponsorship. The Vietnamese next enter a period in which they have a private sponsor who pledges personal and financial support to the refugee families. From one perspective this sponsorship period serves to disperse the Vietnamese to the four winds and deprives them of the comfort of the ethnic community (Tran Tuong Nhu, 1976). From another perspective, this sponsorship period may provide a degree of social and economic security unknown to earlier Asian immigrants, and thus accelerates the pace of their assimilation. During this phase the refugees benefit from continuing public assistance to meet their social, psychological, and financial needs. They are assured aid in housing and employment, and other forms of assistance which serve to facilitate their adaptation into American society.

Phase 2: Ethnic Enclave. We foresee that most Vietnamese refugees will form ethnic enclaves in large cities across America. The Vietnamese seem to be following the route taken by the Chinese and Japanese immigrant groups who came to this country in the early 20th Century. These earlier Asians relied heavily on ethnic group solidarity and subsequently made substantial social and economic achievements (Light, 1972; Lyman, 1974; Miyamoto, 1939). Since early 1976 the Vietnamese have been regrouping, in recognition of their need

for physical and emotional support. They have been moving from small towns to large metropolitan areas, forming substantial ethnic communities in such cities as New York, Dallas, New Orleans, and Los Angeles (Kelly, 1977).

Phase 2 for the earlier Chinese and Japanese immigrants is one in which they organize into ethnic enclaves for mutual comfort and support (Ichihashi, 1932; Kitano, 1976; Lyman, 1974). The development of ethnic enclaves evolves out of the necessity to turn inward in order to avoid a sometimes severely hostile host society (Miyamoto, 1939). The Japanese immigrants in particular maintain a sojourner orientation through Phase 2 (Bonacich, 1973). They retain close family ties in their native country and intend to return to their homeland after acquiring a measure of financial security. Thus, while being a positive step in many ways, Phase 2 for the earlier immigrant is also a time of impeded or delayed socioeconomic adaptation.

Phase 3: Assimilation. We suspect that the Vietnamese period of residence in the ethnic enclave or the degree to which they embrace these ethnic communities will be short-lived compared to other Asian immigrants to the United States. For example, the Vietnamese refugees have not had to deal with the severe degree of hostility and blatant discrimination encountered by earlier Asian groups. While the Vietnamese did encounter some hostility as noted earlier, the very fact that so many Americans were willing to act as sponsors for the refugee families indicates that a large proportion of Americans welcome the Vietnamese. We reason that because of this relatively short-lived period of ghettoization, the meaning and

tenacity of native language, culture, and tradition may be more quickly eroded as the Vietnamese achieve relatively rapid socioeconomic adaptation. Indeed, we speculate that some Vietnamese will not be drawn to the ethnic enclave at all, but upon achieving a greater proficiency with the English language will move headlong into Phase 3: complete socioeconomic adaptation and ultimate assimilation into the larger American society.

Phase 3 for the earlier Asian immigrant also represents total and complete assimilation into American society. In terms of a developmental process, we suggest that the Chinese and Japanese by and large are approaching Phase 3. They are experiencing a measurable degree of upward mobility socioeconomically, with much support provided by the ethnic community (Kitano, 1976; Weiss, 1974).

What we have illustrated is a sociohistorical model of the Vietnamese experience of spontaneous international migration and socioeconomic adaptation in the United States that is different from earlier Asian immigration patterns because of the Vietnamese' unique background and circumstances of migration. In the end, as the model suggests, we see a rapid movement through each phase, from homeland (Phase 1), to camp life (Phase 1a), to sponsorship (Phase 1b), to ethnic enclave (Phase 2), and finally to complete assimilation (Phase 3). Although the Vietnamese may move through more phases of migration and resettlement than did other Asian groups (see Figure 1), we foresee that the Vietnamese will progress through each phase more rapidly and will reach complete assimilation within a comparatively shorter time span than other Asian groups.

Summary and Conclusions

From the time of Survey I in July - August 1975 to the time of Survey V in July - August 1977, the employment situation of Vietnam refugees has steadily improved. Most refugees who want to work have been able to find jobs. During this period, the employment rates have increased from 68.2 percent to 95.1 percent for males and from 50.9 percent to 93.2 percent for females. The proportion of people working full time also increased from three-fourths to slightly more than four-fifths. At the same time there has been a corresponding increase in salary income. The proportion of households with an income of $800 or more a month increased from 14.9 percent at Survey I to 51.4 percent at Survey V. Thus the data suggest that on measures of employment and income the newly arrived Vietnamese refugees are making substantial progress.

It should be noted that the Vietnamese refugees still face many problems. Most have jobs of lower status than they held in Vietnam, and their pay is low by American standards. Most require greater proficiency in the English language in order to compete for higher educational and employment opportunities. Some report feelings of isolation and depression. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that in general, the refugees are making substantial progress socioeconomically, and they are moving steadily toward self-sufficiency (U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1976:3).

Our sociohistorical model shows the contrasts between the immigration and assimilation pattern of earlier Asian immigrant groups

and the unique pattern of spontaneous internatiocnal migration leading to socioeconomic adaptation and future assimilation of the Vietnamese refugees. The relatively high level of education the Vietnamese had at the outset, coupled with their prior socialization to Western culture, appears to give the Vietnamese a springboard to more rapid assimilation than was available to the earlier Asian immigrants. The inroads the Vietnamese have made so quickly in the areas of income and employment appear to forecast a relatively rapid assimilation into American society. It appears likely that an increased familiarity with the English language and an expanding job market might be the final keys to rapid socioeconomic advancement and ultimately total and complete assimilation of the Vietnamese in America.

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Footnotes

1. These surveys were conducted under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Indochina Refugee Task Force. The survey work was conducted by Opportunity Systems, Inc., a commercial research bureau.

2. Labor force participation refers to those persons who are currently employed or those persons who are unemployed but looking for work.

3. The employment rate is the percentage of those employed who wish to be employed.

4. In a broad sense, migration is that geographical movement of a relatively settled people, especially those making a comparatively permanent change of residence. More specifically, migration may be viewed as internal (within the boundaries of a nation) or external (movement across international boundaries) (Hoult, 1969:204).

TABLE 1

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS 14 YEARS AND OLDER
BY SEX AND RELATIONSHIP TO HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD
IN SURVEYS I, II, III, IV AND V
(Weighted Percentages)

Relationship to Head of Household	Males									
	Survey I*		Survey II		Survey III		Survey IV		Survey V	
	Unweighted N	% In Labor Force	Unweighted N	% In Labor Force	Unweighted N	% In Labor Force	Unweighted N	% In Labor Force	Unweighted N	% In Labor Force
Total	2886	69.0	2527	78.7	955	80.0	932	76.5	889	79.2
Head	1251	87.2	1552	89.4	546	89.5	570	86.7	533	87.9
Spouse	57	62.2	20	80.0	5	100.0	9	90.6	12	100.0
Child or spouse of child	765	40.0	357	55.5	183	58.5	175	42.8	162	54.9
Grandchild/nephew/niece	99	50.0	68	64.7	13	69.2	1[illegible]	73.9	12	78.8
Parent or spouse	76	27.9	61	24.6	23	43.5	22	39.6	22	19.4
Other relative	581	61.8	398	71.4	106	67.9	89	60.6	88	68.2
Unrelated/NA	37	28.0	371	84.1	79	91.1	51	96.9	60	87.9

*Wave I data include persons 14 years and older.

TABLE 2

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS 16 YEARS AND OLDER
BY SEX AND RELATIONSHIP TO HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD
IN SURVEYS I, II, III, IV, AND V
(Weighted Percentages)

Relationship to Head of Household	Females									
	Survey I*		Survey II		Survey III		Survey IV		Survey V	
	Unweighted N	% In Labor Force	Unweighted N	% In Labor Force	Unweighted N	% In Labor Force	Unweighted N	% In Labor Force	Unweighted N	% In Labor Force
Total	2994	39.3	1973	40.0	759	44.1	754	44.5	715	49.8
Head	291	62.7	170	71.2	71	66.2	75	68.4	74	77.0
Spouse	1034	35.5	812	32.5	345	38.0	361	46.0	343	50.0
Child or spouse of child	800	33.3	387	49.1	169	43.2	157	34.1	145	50.8
Grandchild/nephew/niece	88	34.4	32	31.3	12	75.0	11	46.8	13	36.9
Parent or spouse	218	6.8	195	5.6	69	10.1	65	9.4	62	3.0
Other relative	537	45.2	339	51.3	91	64.8	82	58.7	77	56.7
Unrelated/NA	26	48.4	38	50.0	2	50.0	3	39.8	1	

*Wave I data include persons 14 years and older.

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TABLE 3

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF PERSONS 16 YEARS AND OLDER
BY SEX AND RELATIONSHIP TO HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD
IN SURVEYS I, II, III, IV, AND V
(Weighted Percentages)

Relationship to Head of Household	Males									
	Survey I		Survey II		Survey III		Survey IV		Survey V	
	Unweighted N	% Employed	Unweighted N	% Employed	Unweighted N	% Employed	Unweighted N	% Employed	Unweighted N	% Employed
Total	**1887**	**68.2**	**1988**	**82.0**	**764**	**89.9**	**704**	**94.6**	**705**	**95.1**
Head.	1110	68.1	1119	82.9	489	90.6	497	93.8	473	94.4
Spouse.	38	63.0	16	68.7	5	100.0	8	100.0	12	100.0
Child or spouse of child. . . .	303	67.5	198	78.8	107	89.7	76	95.4	94	97.1
Grandchild/nephew/ niece	44	70.6	44	81.8	9	88.9	10	100.0	8	100.0
Parent or spouse.	21	54.1	15	60.0	10	80.0	8	100.0	3	100.0
Other relative. .	356	69.1	284	77.1	72	83.3	56	96.9	60	92.7
Unrelated/NA . .	15	50.0	312	87.2	72	93.1	49	96.9	55	98.6

TABLE 4

Employment Status of Persons 16 years and Older
By Sex and Relationship to Heads of Household
In Surveys I, II, III, IV, and V
(weighted percentages)

Relationship to Head of Household	Survey I		Survey II		Survey III		Survey IV		Survey V	
	Unweighted N	% Employed	Unweighted N	% Employed	Unweighted N	% Employed	Unweighted N	% Employed	Unweighted N	% Employed
Total	1122	50.9	789	70.1	327	82.0	318	86.4	354	93.2
Head	194	53.7	121	80.2	47	91.5	50	85.4	53	92.5
Spouse	352	46.2	264	64.8	131	77.9	160	84.8	176	91.7
Child or spouse of child	276	52.9	190	72.1	73	86.3	52	92.0	75	92.6
Grandchild/nephew/niece	28	51.5	10	70.0	9	66.7	4	100.0	4	100.0
Parent or spouse	16	27.9	11	72.8	7	42.9	5	68.0	2	100.0
Other relative	244	55.1	174	68.4	59	84.7	45	89.8	44	100.0
Unrelated/NA	12	53.1	19	73.7	1	100.0	2	50.0	-	-

TABLE 5

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF PERSONS 16 YEARS AND OLDER
BY PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH
IN SURVEYS I, II, III, AND V*
(Weighted Percentages)

Proficiency in English	Survey I		Survey II		Survey III		Survey V	
	Unweighted N	% Employed	Unweighted N	% Employed	Unweighted N	% Employed	Unweighted N	% Employed
Total.	2988	62.7	2003	78.4	1091	87.5	1059	94.5
Understand English								
Not at all . . .	127	56.7	155	71.0	47	72.3	25	88.8
Some	1856	60.6	1481	78.5	794	87.5	672	93.4
Well	975	67.8	363	81.0	250	90.4	362	97.1
Speak English								
Not at all . . .	141	53.2	161	70.8	50	72.0	27	90.1
Some	1873	60.9	1484	78.6	790	87.0	681	93.5
Well	946	68.1	355	80.8	251	90.4	351	97.0
Read English								
Not at all . . .	142	52.8	173	69.9	59	72.9	38	92.3
Some	1791	61.4	1432	78.8	768	87.5	689	93.4
Well	1024	66.7	393	80.4	264	90.9	332	97.3
Write English								
Not at all . . .	155	53.5	179	70.4	59	74.6	38	92.6
Some	1812	61.5	1444	78.7	769	87.4	704	93.5
Well	991	66.7	376	80.6	263	90.9	317	97.1

*Data not available in Survey IV.

TABLE 6

REASONS FOR NOT SEEKING EMPLOYMENT
IN SURVEYS I, II, III, IV AND V
(Weighted Percentages)

Reasons	Survey I	Survey II	Survey III	Survey IV	Survey V
Total.	259	1723	612	663	545
Attending school .	35.5	34.4	49.2	56.0	48.2
Keeping house. . .	17.3	32.2	36.6	28.2	29.8
Poor health. . . .	6.5	14.1	13.2	17.7	21.3
Poor English . . .	19.3	19.0	11.3	14.9	9.1
Other means of support.	10.8	3.5	2.5	1.6	.5
Discouraged. . . .	-	1.1	.3	.1	.4
Other.	17.0	5.5	3.1	2.1	3.1

TABLE 7

MONTHLY INCOME OF REFUGEE HOUSEHOLDS FROM ALL SOURCES
IN SURVEYS I, II, III, IV AND V
(Weighted Percentages)

	Survey I	Survey II	Survey III	Survey IV	Survey V
Total.	1570	1424	617	645	607
Under $200 . .	42.1	17.6	5.3	4.0	3.2
$200 - 399 . .	14.2	15.4	13.1	11.0	7.8
$400 - 599 . .	17.3	20.9	22.2	22.0	20.6
$600 - 799 . .	11.5	13.6	13.9	16.2	14.0
$800 - over. .	14.9	32.4	41.2	43.8	51.4
N/A.	-	-	4.2	2.8	3.1

TABLE 8

TYPES OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE RECEIVED BY REFUGEE HOUSEHOLDS
IN SURVEYS I, II, III, IV AND V
(Weighted Percentages)

Types of Assistance	Survey I	Survey II	Survey III	Survey IV	Survey V
Total	1565	1424	617	645	607
% Receiving Assistance	39.6	42.0	49.9	33.4*	32.0*
Food Stamps	21.4	25.6	24.7	24.7	22.8
Medical Assistance	17.9	23.7	42.8	N/A	N/A
Refugee Financial Assistance	18.2	13.4	19.8	23.4	20.9
SSI	.5	2.8	6.3	6.5	7.4
Other	1.6	-	-	-	-

*Does not include medical assistance. Information from States indicates 47.6% of refugees were eligible for medical assistance as of March 1, 1977, and 46.1% as of August 1, 1977; household data are not available.

FIGURE I

SPONTANEOUS INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION (SIM):
A MODEL OF VIETNAMESE IMMIGRATION AND RESETTLEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

Spontaneous International Migration (SIM): The Vietnamese Pattern

Asian Immigration: The Chinese and Japanese Pattern